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COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF TRANSPORT

(Commission decision H (50))

Report by the Executive Secretary

1. This report has been prepared in response to decision H (50).

2. Follow-up to the second Pan-European Transport Conference (Crete, 14-16 March 1994), as decided by the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) at its fifty-seventh session in January 1995, has been initiated by its subsidiary bodies and is underway. A third Pan-European Transport Conference, organized, as were the two previous ones, jointly by the European Parliament and the European Commission, has been scheduled to take place in Helsinki in June 1997. The secretariat has been requested to participate in the preparations of the third conference in order to prevent duplication of work.

3. The Second Road Safety Week in the ECE region, aimed at waging simultaneous campaigns with a common target group in ECE member countries, was held from 27 March to 2 April 1995. The common target group chosen was young road users, the most vulnerable group of road users. The second Road Safety Week was positively evaluated by Governments, particularly Governments of central and east European countries, which have less experience in road safety activities. Thanks to its international dimension, the Road Safety Week generated greater awareness by mass media, road users and the general public of road safety problems, particularly in those countries.

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4. Preparatory work for the Regional Conference on Transport and Environment continued. After reaching agreement on a text of Draft Guidelines for a Common Strategy regard Transport and Environment, the Preparatory Committee identified a number of issues on which binding agreement could be achieved: environmental standards for vehicles in international transport, periodic technical inspections of vehicles in-use and development of combined transport on inland waterways and coastal shipping. It was felt that the relevant legal instruments could be adopted by or signed on the occasion of the Conference. In addition to these legal instruments, the outcome of the Conference was expected to include a programme of action and a political declaration. With regard to the date of the Conference, it was felt that, if it was not possible to hold the Conference in the Autumn 1996, it should, in view of the calendar of meetings for 1997, be held in Autumn 1997. Two ECE countries had expressed interest in and were currently considering hosting the Conference.

5. Work on the revision of the Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (TIR Convention) has been initiated and is well under way. An informal group of experts has established a number of new elements for a revised TIR transit regime focusing, inter alia, on control measures to restrict access to the regime and on a new guarantee system to cover Customs duties and taxes at risk. Two sessions of the TIR Contact Group, including participation of the transport industry and the insurers, were also devoted to a discussion of this matter.

6. The consolidated text of the revised European Provisions concerning the International Carriage of Dangerous Goods by Inland Waterway was finalized in cooperation with the Central Commission for the Navigation on the Rhine (CCNR). The future updating of these technical provisions will be carried out on an annual basis by the Working Party on the Transport of Dangerous Goods. The establishment of a special group for the elaboration of a draft European Agreement concerning the international carriage of dangerous goods by inland waterway (ADN) has been decided.

7. The Convention on Customs Treatment of Pool Containers used in International Transport (Container Pool Convention) has been signed so far by six countries and the European Community. The Convention will come into force once it has five Contracting Parties.

8. A new international legal instrument, the European Agreement on Main Inland Waterways of International Importance (AGN), was finalized in 1995 bringing the total number of ECE Agreements and Conventions in the field of transport to fifty-one. The number of Contracting Parties to these legal instruments continued also to increase: in 1995 29 States, of which 13 were ECE member countries in transition and two non-ECE member countries, became Contracting Parties to one or more of those legal instruments. In view of the growing importance of the ECE legal instruments related to transport, Governments who had not yet done so were invited to become Contracting Parties to them.

9. The amended 1958 Agreement concerning the adoption of uniform technical prescriptions for wheeled vehicles, equipment and parts and for reciprocal recognition of approvals granted on the basis of these prescriptions entered into force on 16 October 1995. It should simplify the legal and administrative procedures in adopting new Regulations and amendments and facilitate the accession by regional economic integration organizations such as the European Union as well as accession by countries outside the ECE. A second stage of the development of the Agreement was started with a view to enhancing the global scope of the Agreement.

10. Consensus on the legal form of a new instrument on uniform provisions on inland water transport and coastal shipping using combined transport techniques could not be achieved and the possible legal and substantive options in this respect continued to be studied.

11. Assistance to countries in transition has received increased attention from the Inland Transport Committee and its subsidiary bodies. An ad hoc session of the Working Party on Transport Trends and Economics devoted to that subject was held. A workshop on transport statistics, to be held in 1996, is under preparation. The Inland Transport Committee itself held a Round Table on Five years of reform in the Transport Sector: Assessment and Prospects. The Regional Advisors intensified their activities which included promotion of subregional cooperation for the coordinated development of infrastructures, advisory services on transport sector transformation, expert assessment of draft legislation and the organization of a seminar on ECE work in the field of transport including legal instruments for the benefit of CIS States.

12. The TEM and TER Projects have continued to implement activities aimed at the coordinated development of international road and rail as well as combined transport infrastructure in central and eastern Europe, including the updating of the respective networks, development of respective data bases, elaboration of pre- and feasibility studies and a number of workshops and training seminars. These activities benefitted from contributions by donor Governments and international institutions and organizations.

13. An additional professional post has been redeployed to the Transport Division for the work on the development of international rules on the transport of dangerous goods.

14. The vacant P-5 post in the Transport Division has been filled on a permanent basis. Two other vacant posts were filled on a temporary basis until the contracts could not be extended due to the special measures decided by the Secretary General. Four professional posts, including the new one referred to above, are currently vacant in the Transport Division.